

To: Faulk, Libby[Faulk.Libby@epa.gov]
From: Smith, Paula
Sent: Fri 8/7/2015 1:33:56 AM
Subject: FW: Answer to question about how the release occurred-- please advise asap

- Paula

From: Mylott, Richard
Sent: Thursday, August 06, 2015 2:12 PM
To: Ostrander, David; Card, Joan; Hestmark, Martin; McGrath, Shaun
Cc: Smith, Paula
Subject: Answer to question about how the release occurred-- please advise asap

Deliberative Process/Ex. 5

August 6 EPA Statement on Gold King Mine Release

Yesterday, an EPA team working to investigate and address contamination at the Gold King Mine in San Juan County, Colo. unexpectedly triggered a large release of mine waste water into the upper portions of Cement Creek. Initial estimates are that the release contained approximately 1M gallons of water that was held behind unconsolidated debris near an abandoned mine portal. There were several workers at the site at the time of the breach, all were unharmed.

Following the release, the Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment notified

water users downstream so they could take appropriate steps to turn off intakes until the contaminated water passes.

The primary environmental concern is the pulse of contaminated water containing sediment and metals flowing as an orange-colored discharge downstream through Cement Creek and into the Animas River. The water associated with the release is obvious and highly discolored. As a precaution, EPA recommends that recreational users of the Animas River avoid contact with or use of the river until the pulse of mine water passes. Over the next several days, EPA teams will be sampling and investigating downstream locations to confirm that the release has passed and poses no additional concerns for aquatic life or water users. EPA will also be assessing damage near the mine portal and any residual releases of water at the mine site.